

# Winter Storms

**Winter storms can range from moderate snow over a few hours to blizzard conditions with blinding, wind-driven snow or freezing rain that lasts several days. The time to prepare is before the snow falls or ice forms.**

## **Preparing for winter storms**

- Listen to your radio or television for winter storm forecasts and other information.
- Prepare your home for cold weather.
- Install storm windows. Insulate outside walls, attics and crawl spaces. Wrap pipes, especially those near cold outer walls or in attics or crawl spaces. Repair leaks in the roof, around the doors and in the windows.
- Have appropriate cold weather clothing available.
- If you have a kerosene heater, refuel your heater outside and remember to keep it at least three feet from flammable objects.
- Make sure your fireplace functions properly.
- Have rock salt and sand on hand for traction on ice.
- Fill your gas tank before the snow starts falling.

## **During a winter storm**

- Wear several layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. Wear mittens rather than gloves. Wear a warm, woolen cap.
- Do not drive unnecessarily.
- Reduce the temperature in your home to conserve fuel.
- Heat only the areas of your home you are using. Close doors and curtains or cover windows and doors with blankets.

- Use alternative heat methods safely. **Never** use a gas or charcoal grill, hibachi or portable propane heater to cook indoors or heat your home.
- Be careful when shoveling snow. Do not overexert yourself.
- Be sure to eat regularly. Food provides calories that maintain body heat.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia — slurred speech, disorientation, uncontrollable shivering, stumbling, drowsiness and body temperature of 95 degrees Fahrenheit or less.
- If you become trapped outside, get out of the wind and stay dry. Build a lean-to or snow cave if nothing else is available. Do not eat snow; it will make you too cold.

### **If in your vehicle**

- Make sure someone knows where you are going. Stay on the main roads.
- If you must stop, remain inside the vehicle. Use a bright distress flag or your hazard lights to draw attention to your vehicle.
- If trapped in a blizzard, clear your tail pipe and run your engine and heater for 10 minutes every hour. Open your window slightly.
- During night hours, keep the dome light on in the car so rescue crews can see your vehicle.
- Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle. Include a three-day supply of water and non-perishable food that can be eaten without being cooked. Include a blanket or sleeping bag for each passenger, a flashlight, cell phone, shovel, sack of sand or kitty litter, booster cables, flare, coffee can with lid and toilet paper.



**Washington State Department of Health**

**PO Box 47890**

**Olympia, WA 98504-7890**

**Web Site: [www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)**

**360-236-4027**

**(800) 525-0127**